

# KIRWAN UNMASKED.

## A REVIEW OF KIRWAN, IN SIX LETTERS.

ADDRESSED TO THE

REV. NICHOLAS MURRAY, D. D.  
OF ELIZABETHTOWN, N. J.

BY

THE RIGHT REV. JOHN HUGHES, D. D.  
BISHOP OF NEW YORK.

THIRD EDITION.

NEW YORK:  
EDWARD DUNIGAN & BROTHER,  
151 FULTON-STREET.

MDCCLXVIII.



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## KIRWAN UNMASKED.

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TO KIRWAN,

ALIAS THE REV. NICHOLAS MURRAY, D. D.,  
Of Elizabethtown, New Jersey.

DEAR SIR:—

So long as you wore a mask, which no honest man need ever wear in a free country like this, I was excused, on your own admission, from any obligation to notice you. Now that you have cast it aside, I feel no longer bound to adhere to my first resolution.

Your Letters purport to explain the reasons why you left the Roman Catholic Church and became a Presbyterian. The object of mine will be to review those reasons. If I shall succeed in refuting them, and assigning others more in accordance with the facts of the case, I will not trouble myself with answering those in your second series under the head of reasons why you do not return. If the deserters from the American flag in the Mexican campaign, (among whom, I am sorry to say, were some

Irishmen,) can justify themselves for having fled from the ranks of their country, the world will readily dispense with *their* reasons for not returning.—The enemy, no doubt, received them with that mingled feeling of joy at the treason, and contempt for the traitor, which, on the whole, is rather honorable than otherwise in the character of human nature—whilst the gallant army they had forsaken had the consolation to know that after their departure, it contained in each case, at least one coward less than before. But friends and foes would take it as a matter of course that such persons would have good reasons for not returning.

The Catholic Church, however, has a mother's heart, and not a warrior's. If at any time, moved by the grace of God, you should knock at her gates, as a penitent, she would receive you as such, and rejoice at your restoration. Considering the importance which you attach to your going out from her communion, thirty years ago, never, never, to return, you must admit that she has borne your absence with great resignation; in fact, amidst the numerous defections from the faith which loneliness and poverty entail on juvenile immigrants and orphan boys of Irish and Catholic parentage in this country, an individual case like yours might easily have escaped her notice. But you have

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taken from her the bliss of ignorance, in the premises. "Kirwan" tells her that you, Nicholas Murray, now a Presbyterian clergyman, gave her the cold shoulder, when you were quite a boy, thirty years ago. Nay, more; he says that one of the means employed by her for arresting the progress of sin, was by you turned into an opportunity of additional sinning;—"you always found," he says, "that you could *play your pranks better* after confession than before." . . . This inward reading of yourself, at so early an age, should have convinced you that already, and unknown to yourself, you were a genuine Protestant book, done up, some how, by mistake, in Catholic binding.

I honor the man who, under his responsibility to God, has the moral courage to change his religion, when, after mature investigation, he conscientiously believes that he is passing from error to truth. It is a great and solemn act. When it is attended, as it sometimes is, by the greatest sacrifice of worldly interest, and is manifestly done for the soul's, and God's, and Truth's sake, it becomes, in my estimation, the most heroic and sublime act that man is capable of performing on the earth. I do not say that it is always insincere even when the convert promotes his temporal interests by the change. But, in the latter case, it loses much

of the influence which, as an example, it would otherwise exercise on the public mind. Neither do I regard it as improper that he who has experienced such a change, should assign the reasons that brought it about. But in assigning them, all serious men would expect that they should be good and true reasons. Now, I propose, in reply to your Letters, to prove that the reasons assigned by you are not good reasons in themselves, and that even if they were, in the nature of things, they found no place in the circumstances of your supposed conversion from “Popery” to Presbyterianism.

Your Letters, so far as regards the grammatical construction of phrases, and a correct and almost elegant use of Anglo-Saxon words, are not unworthy of the country which produced a Dean Swift, or a Goldsmith. They are also pervaded by a silvery thread of wit, which is unmistakeably Irish, but which too often, in your Letters, runs into profanity. As a Logician, you are entitled to little praise. As a Theologian, even on the Protestant system, to less still; whilst as an upright, candid adversary, honestly laboring to overthrow doctrines believed to be erroneous, you can lay claim to none whatever.

Two things, at the outset, tell very badly against you. You represent me as teaching a

doctrine which I do not believe, and yet, in various unexpected forms, you profess to render me the homage of your respect. Now, dear sir, let me say, that if you believe me to be a deceiver of my fellow-Catholics, you cannot have entertained any respect for my character, unless your moral perceptions are too dim to discover any difference between vice and virtue. If you profess a respect, which you do not feel, it is equally manifest that your standard of morals is artificial, subject to the control of your will and your pen. In either case you are inconsistent, and it is, perhaps, well for you that you did not write your Letters under the solemnity of an oath, in which case something like perjury would come out on the cross-examination.

By what right, sir, did you assume that I am not sincere in the profession of the Catholic Faith? And if you did assume it, by what rule of hypocrisy and falsehood did you stultify yourself by professing respect for my character? You could find the premises of such a false and uncharitable conclusion only in your heart, or mine. To mine you have had no access, and you should have been cautious in proclaiming such discoveries as could have been derived, only by analogy, from your own.

I believe the truth of the doctrines taught by

the Holy Catholic Church as firmly as I do my own existence. Nay, more. I believe that, as containing the fulness of Divine revelation, it is the only true Church on the earth—although many true Catholic doctrines are found floating about as opinions in the religious atmosphere of Protestantism. This is my profession of faith, of the sincerity of which the Almighty is my witness; and I am not aware that I have ever given you, or any other human being, reason to infer, by word or action, that I believed otherwise.

I must decline, therefore, the tender of *your* respect for my character. But I would not have you on that account to regard me as an enemy. On the contrary, I would be your friend; and the highest proof of this which you have left it in my power to offer, is the sincere declaration that, as a fellow-being, you have my pity—and best wishes withal. I shall begin to analyze your reasons next week.

† JOHN HUGHES, Bishop of New York.

## LETTER II.

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TO KIRWAN,

ALIAS THE REV. NICHOLAS MURRAY, D. D.,

Of Elizabethtown, New Jersey.

DEAR SIR :—

The merit of your letters, if they have any in the eyes of sincere Protestants, is in the supposed fact that you were brought up and instructed in the Catholic religion; and that your testimony is more trustworthy, on this account, than if you had been born and brought up a Protestant.

This is, in fact, the ground which you have taken. You speak of *yourself*, of *your* knowledge and experience of the Catholic religion, of *your* reasons for renouncing it, from the beginning to the end of your letters. *You* are the witness in the cause; *you* are the hero of the romance; and it will be impossible for me to do justice to the review, without paying attention to the prominent personality which you have established for yourself, in assigning the reasons of your conversion.

The first position which I intend to establish then, is, that Ireland never produced a peasant more ignorant of the Catholic, or of the Protestant religion, than you were when you renounced the creed of your fathers and became an infidel. For the proof of this position you shall be my witness. Turn to your first letter and read your own words :

“I first became an infidel. Knowing nothing of religion but that which was taught me by parents and priests, and thinking that that was the sum of it, when that was rejected infidelity became my only alternative.”—p. 11.

“On reaching the years of maturity my mind was a perfect blank as to all religious instruction.”—p. 30.

“With my Missal I was somewhat familiar ; I said the catechism when I was confirmed, at the age of nine or ten, and that was the amount of my religious education. At the age of eighteen years the catechism was forgotten, and the Missal was neglected, and as my conscience was uneducated, and my mind unfurnished with religious principles, the only test of truth left me was my common sense.”—p. 31.

This was precisely the age at which you left the Church and became an infidel. Your “mind was a perfect blank as to all religious

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instruction." In other words, you were perfectly ignorant of the religion which you were about to reject, and, if we can trust to your own language, this ignorance was the only reason going before and determining your conversion to infidelity.

The reader may suppose that in proclaiming your profound ignorance of religion, your meaning is, that you understood the Catholic faith, in which you were brought up, but that you were as yet ignorant of the pure evangelical doctrines which you have since embraced. But this would be a mistake. Your meaning is, that you were entirely ignorant of the Catholic religion, as well as of all others. For this also we have your own testimony, in the following words :

"Some book or tract, now forgotten, gave rise to some inquiries as to the Mass. I asked, What does it mean ? I could not tell, though for years a regular attendant upon it. Why does the priest dress so ? What book does he read from, when carried now to his right, and now to his left ? What means those candles burning at noonday ? Why do I say prayers in Latin, which I understand not ? Should I not know what I am saying when addressing my Maker ? Why bow down and strike my breast when the little bell rings ? What does

it all mean? *The darkness of Egypt rested upon these questions.*"—p. 33.

Never did man forsake one religion and join another, who had contrived to be so profoundly ignorant of the forsaken creed as you, Nicholas Murray, prove yourself to have been, in regard to Catholicity, when you renounced it and became an infidel. Whatever you know of it now, true or false, you have learned as other Protestants do, outside of the Church and from her enemies.

It is imputed to our countrymen that they *act* first, and *reflect* afterwards. I am sorry, sir, that *your* conduct, when you renounced the creed of your humble, but, I have no doubt, virtuous and respectable parents, goes so far to justify the imputation. It is certain, on your own testimony, that *when* you ceased to be a Catholic and became an infidel, the Catholic religion might be true, or might be false, for all you knew about it. It is equally certain that *when*, in 1847, you published a series of smart, if not learned, reasons for your conduct thirty years ago, you have been again *acting more Hibernico*—and sorry am I that during so long a period, with the advantages of American and Presbyterian training, you have not yet outgrown the national weakness. But, sir, no genuine Irishman would attempt to jus-

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tify his act by reasons which, in the order of time, occur to his mind thirty years after the act had been performed—as you have done. A genuine Irishman would consent to be laughed at, and would join in the laugh with right good humor, rather than attempt the trick of reversing the wheel of time, and assigning the reasons of 1847 as the motives of his conduct in 1820.

The chronology of the events which make up a case is oftentimes very important. Previous to your conversion you knew nothing of the Catholic—nothing of the Protestant—religion. The reasons assigned in your recent Letters, may or may not be good reasons, but whether good or bad, they had nothing to do with *your* change of religion. You *blundered* out of the Church and into infidelity, without knowing why or wherefore—and your reasons are all out of date. They might be styled with great propriety, “An Irishman’s Motives for becoming a Protestant, arranged according to the order imputed to his Countrymen, that of *acting* first, and *reflecting* afterwards.”

You may blame your priests or your parents, as you please, for the peculiar absence of religious knowledge which preceded your conversion. But the *fact* of your profound ignorance of all religion, at the period of your

change, *is the material point*, and you have been candid enough to establish that point beyond all dispute.

You seem to be troubled with a peculiar weakness of memory—and this is a great misfortune in a Christian man who writes for the edification of the public. After what we have just seen of your mental condition at the period of your apostacy from the Church, into what an awkward exhibition of yourself does this short memory betray you at the end of your first Letter, where you profess “to state in a series of Letters to my Right Reverence *the reasons which induced you* to leave the Roman Catholic Church, and which prevent you from returning to it.”—(page 11.) Now, dear “Kirwan,” we are told in logic, that, of two propositions which mutually contradict each other, *one* must be *false*. If your mind was “a *perfect blank* as to *all* religious instruction,” as you assure us it was, (page 30,) how could you have had “reasons that induced you to leave the Church?”—(page 11.) Have you forgotten in the one page, what you had affirmed in the other? Now, however, that I have called your *recollection* to the mistake, pray be serious, and tell the public *which* of these contradictory statements you would have it to believe. Why, sir, your own great

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stand-by, “common sense,” revolts at the insult of religious “reasons” offered from a mind which, as to religious instruction, is a “perfect plank!!”

Some persons may think that you are quizzing the public. I think not. Your memory appears to have been but poor from your childhood. And here allow me to pluck up a nettle which you would have planted on the graves of “your parents and priests.” Thanks to their charitable efforts for your instruction in the Christian doctrine, you “knew your Catechism by heart, at the age of nine or ten years, when you were confirmed.”—(page 31.) Now I would call this a good, almost an extraordinary memory in a child of ten years. It had taken in and retained the waters of Christian knowledge which overspread the pages of the entire Catechism which you knew by heart. This was no trifle. But the first subsequent evidence of its failure is the fact that you have *forgotten* to tell us of the sad catastrophe by which it became a cracked and leaky cistern immediately after confirmation; so that the “catechism itself was forgotten” when you arrived at the jumping-off period of eighteen years.—(Ibid.) Pray, might I ask, whether it was this, your precocious talent of *forgetfulness* which caused you to be “even

talked of as a candidate for Maynooth?"—  
(page 31.)

But after all, dear sir, this memory of yours puzzles me amazingly. I turn to page 98, where having given me up, you address the Irish Catholic Laity in such tones of winning tenderness, that Blarney Castle never tipped the human tongue with sweeter. "Your present feelings, as to your Church, I have had, and in all their force. I can entirely appreciate them. I have cordially *hated* Protestantism and Protestants; and I have seen the time when I regarded the man as my personal enemy who would utter a word against my religion. But those were the days of my youth and of my ignorance. When I became a man I put away childish things."—(page 98.) Why, this is queer. You had forgotten at eighteen what the Church had taught you; and you remember at nine-and-forty your *hated of Protestants, which she never taught you at all!* You remember that when you became a man, you "put away childish things" and "became also an infidel." Yet you forget that you had told us before, that when you became a man, there were no "childish things" left to be put away—that they had already *sloped* from your memory—that at the early age of eighteen you had "forgotten them,"

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and that, as to religious instruction, your mind was a “perfect blank!!”

It is not my business to reconcile these flat, palpable contradictions. I have established, from your own repeated avowal, your utter and profound ignorance of the Catholic religion, when you left the Church, and became an infidel. You never came back to finish, or rather to *begin* your *Catholic* education. Like one of the winged messengers let loose from the hand of the Patriarch, you found more congenial sustenance abroad, and you returned to the Ark no more. In all this you may have been sincere, and if you were, in nothing of this do I blame you. But I do blame you for assuming a character *which does not belong to you.*

When a man changes his religion he ought to be serious and sincere. When he does it with that direct reference to his account at the bar of God’s eternal judgment, which leaves no doubt as to the sincerity of his motive, then, as I have said once before, I regard it as the grandest and most truly heroic act of which a rational being is capable on this earth. To assign the motives for such an act is equally fair and honorable. But, sir, I can conceive of nothing more disgusting to an upright mind, than to discover what is vulgarly, but very ex-

pressively called "humbug" mixed up in the assignment of such motives. This foul admixture is what I charge upon your recent Letters, and what I blame.

The American public are generous, and credulous also, towards those who profess to write for their amusement or instruction. Being chiefly Protestants, little acquainted with the religion which you have forsaken and denounced, they would be—they have been—particularly generous and credulous towards you. As an Irishman, it was unworthy of you to take unfair advantage of these noble sentiments.

It is true, that if they read your pages with a cold, impartial criticism, they would see enough to put them on their guard. But your profound ignorance of the Catholic doctrine, when you became an infidel, which you assert and repeat, *usque ad nauseam*, they will construe, like yourself, as the reproach of your parents and priests. On the other hand, your introduction of yourself as one brought up in the "camp of the enemy," was obviously intended to deceive them. Here is your bow to the public. "I was baptized by a priest—I was confirmed by a bishop—I often went to confession—I have worn my amulets—and I have said my Pater Nosters and my Hail

Marys, more times than I can now enumerate."—(page 10.)

Now, this announcement of your competency to treat the subject, is sufficiently brief, and sufficiently stupid.—Barring the "amulets," Voltaire could have said the same of himself. But ninety-nine out of every hundred of your American readers would say on perusing this—"There, there, at length, is a man who knows Popery *from within, from personal knowledge*—a man who, with the modesty of true genius, merely insinuates the extent of his information, and thus avoids egotism and the offensive display of his gifts."

Such feelings on the part of the American public ought not to be trifled with by you. Of your own knowledge of Popery, as you call it, you know nothing—and you have avowed it. Then you are no more competent to speak or write of it, than Dr. Brownlee was. What you know of it, true or false, you, like him, have learned from its enemies. But there is a difference. Dr. Brownlee never had the chance *to learn and then forget* the Catholic catechism before the age of eighteen.

Let the public, then, understand that you are to take rank among those anti-Catholic writers, who draw from such fountains as that mammoth reservoir—"McGavin's Protestant."

Anti-Catholic retailers like you may take from that source theological lore to any extent, and deal it out to those who have a relish for it. It would seem that such persons are *still* numerous enough to make the nineteenth century ashamed of itself, if it were the age of light which it professes to be.

In this Letter I have proved, on your own testimony, that you were utterly ignorant of Catholic doctrine when you left the Church and became an infidel. In my next I shall have the more pleasing task of tracing your progress out of infidelity and into Presbyterianism, which was a decided improvement in your spiritual, and possibly in your temporal condition. Meanwhile, I feel the same pity and benevolence towards you as before. \*

† JOHN HUGHES, Bishop of New York.

## LETTER III.

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TO KIRWAN,

ALIAS THE REV. NICHOLAS MURRAY, D. D.,

Of Elizabethtown, New Jersey.

DEAR SIR:—

You tell us that “ignorance is the parent of papal devotion;” (second series, page 86.) How was it, then, that ignorance produced so contrary an effect upon you? You appear to have been rather a good boy, when you said your catechism, at nine or ten years of age. But at eighteen, your mind was a “perfect blank as to all religious instruction.” Could ignorance be greater than this? How is it, then, that instead of the Catholic saint, which *your rule* of “papal devotion” should have led us to expect, we find you at that period of your life, as you have taken pains to tell us, “an infidel?” It seems that from ten to eighteen years, as *your* “ignorance” grew *more*, your “devotion” grew *less*—proving that, at least in your case, “ignorance is *not* the parent of papal devotion,” but rather of infidelity.

I insist, as you perceive, on determining the

state of your intellect at the period of your fall from the faith. Your *subsequent* acquirement of knowledge and education, I have no wish to question or deny. But the public will be naturally interested in ascertaining the condition of your mind, at the critical period, for you, when you rejected the Catholic Church, and embraced infidelity. A life so important to the philosophical and theological world as yours, requires to be divided into distinct and successive epochs, and to have each of its periods considered separately from the others, if one would do justice to the whole.

First, then, we must *leave out the Presbyterian education*, which you have acquired since you became an infidel, at the age of eighteen. Secondly, we must *leave out the education of the Catholic catechism*, which you had forgotten. Thirdly, we must *leave out any knowledge which you might have derived from Catholic devotions*, for you tell us that you said your prayers "in Latin, which you did not understand,"—(page 33.) Fourthly, we must *leave out all instruction by hearing*, for you tell us "you never heard a sermon preached in a Catholic chapel in Ireland; nor a word of explanation on a single Christian topic, or doctrine, or duty,"—(page 29.) Now according to your own statement this was the condition

of your mind when you left the Catholic Church : — and I doubt whether Christendom could furnish one other instance of such mental nudity — such utter destitution of all Christian knowledge.

And now, forsooth, your “Reasons” for leaving the Church ! What reasons ? The existence of reasons in such a mind, on such a subject, was a metaphysical impossibility. Reasons necessarily imply comparison ; comparison necessarily supposes knowledge of the things compared ; but in your case, as we take it from your own pen, there was no knowledge of the things to be compared, and therefore there could be no comparison ; and therefore no reasons,—that is, no reasons for a mind in the condition of yours, as you have described it.

But you had, you say, “Common sense.” I doubt it. “Common sense” is by no means so *common*, as you seem to imagine. If you take the term to signify the general opinion of the age and country you lived in at the time, it is evident that your renouncing Catholicity, and becoming an infidel, was not, and could not be called, an exercise of “common sense.” If, on the other hand, you mean that intrinsic faculty of the human mind, by which a man decides mentally according to the evidences of the case, it is equally clear in your

case, that common sense had no evidences to act upon ; and although I do not deny its existence in the abstract, yet its agency could have had nothing to do with your real or imaginary conversion. Tell an African beneath the tropics about *ice*, of what avail will his “common sense” be to him in determining the truth or error of your statement ?

But supposing he admits the *existence* of ice, will his “common sense” enable him to determine any of its properties ? Not at all. His “common sense” is just as likely to decide that ice will burn, as that it will chill, the hand, or other part of the body to which it might be applied. Now your case and his are equal illustrations of “common sense,” in the absence of the elements from which *its office* is inseparable, namely, knowledge of the things to which it is applied. For you, religious knowledge, at the period of your change, consisted of *two parts* ; the one Presbyterian or Protestant, *which you had yet to learn* ;— the other Catholic, *which you had forgotten, or had never known*. In the absence of both these divisions of religious knowledge, were you not much in the condition of the African, deciding on the properties of ice, by the standard of “common sense ?”

I think, sir, that you will admit this reason-

ing to be conclusive. The premises are your own, the conclusions are logically and fairly deduced. And if so, then it follows that, at the time of your pretended conversion, you had not and could not have had any reasons for your change of religion. And if so, it follows again, that in assigning those mentioned in your Letters as inducing you to make the change, you have been *imposing* on the good faith of your fellow-beings, and exhibiting a want of that regard for truth which would be so becoming in a minister of religion, and especially one who professes so high a respect for "common sense," and so intimate an acquaintance with his "unfettered Bible." Does the Bible warrant such statements as the following?

You tell us how the priest used to question you in confession, and how you used to answer him, (page 20.) You complain that he did "not speak to you in English," but "in Latin," (same page.) You tell us a few minutes after that you "did not understand Latin," (page 33.) Now the difficulty is, *how* could you answer questions in a language which *you did not understand?* It seems that when you went to confession something like the wonders of Pentecost took place between you and the priest. He spoke to you in an unknown

tongue, and you answered him with the utmost ease, *although you did not understand the language in which he addressed you !!* There is nothing more miraculous on record than this, if what you say were true. *But it is not true.* The priest spoke to you in English; you answered him in English. Why then do you “bear false witness against” the priest, charging him with having spoken to you “in Latin,” which “you did not understand ?” Does Presbyterianism require such services as *this*, at your hands ? In former times you found “that you could play your pranks better after confession than before ;”—but after thirty years of reading the Bible, might not one expect that you would give up “playing your pranks” altogether ?

We have already seen that when you left the Catholic Church your mind was, in your own words, a “perfect blank as to all religious instruction.” The reader will be curious to learn when and how you procured the necessary outfit to cover the mental nudity in which you forsook us, and to appear before the public (as you have appeared in your recent Letters) decked off in the secondhand raiment of Catholic Theology. . This is a natural and not unreasonable curiosity ; and considering how much your Letters are in the style of Auto-

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biography, I am surprised you did not account for your *Protestant knowledge* as well as your *Catholic ignorance*. Let me supply the omission as briefly as possible.

It seems that like other spars of Irish shipwreck you drifted to these shores at an early age. You had the good or the bad fortune to be picked up by Presbyterian patrons. You were a stranger and *they took you in*. Whether they were gifted or not with that "second sight" peculiar to the children of the *clouds*, in North Britain, it does great credit to their penetration to have discovered in you (under all the disadvantages of that ignorance and infidelity to which you have so often directed our attention) what *poetry* has called,

*A gem of purest ray serene.*

Under the influence of this benevolent anticipation, *they sent you to college*. As your mind was a "perfect blank," of course you had nothing to *unlearn*. There was no popish rubbish left from the ruins of the former edifice. The foundations were unobstructed and clear, and the new architects had only to proceed with their work and build you up according to the approved rules of Presbyterian "constructiveness." *They did so build you up*, accordingly. And now, you are what you are.

In assigning reasons why you left the Catholic Church and now cannot return, I am surprised you have omitted all this. To most Catholics, and indeed to many Protestants, *this reason alone* would be quite sufficient to account for it all.

And yet, there is nothing in the poverty which caused you to fall into such hands, of which it would not be great weakness, on your part, to be in the least ashamed. If circumstances had not placed you in a *false position*, I think you would feel proud of the poverty which you inherited from your Irish parents; for it is the most incontestable evidence that your Catholic ancestors were “true men,” in their generation. If they had been unprincipled hypocrites, capable of betraying their conscience and their God, at almost any period within the last three hundred years, they might have renounced their religion, and pocketed the bribe which the Gospel, as “by law established,” had set apart as the recompense of apostacy from the Catholic faith. But they did not. They supposed that *their posterity* would be worthy of them;—they supposed that *one* Esau, selling his birthright for a mess of pottage, was enough in the history of our race; they submitted to be plundered of their earthly goods; they submitted to be deprived

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of education ; the cruel edict of ignorance thus enacted against them, was a *Protestant* edict ; they submitted to its penalties ; but, on the other hand, they asserted the right and superiority of glorious *principle* over base and mercenary *interest* ; they proved that the material tyrant cannot vanquish the immaterial and immortal mind ; they bore and defied his torture, while they writhed under it ; they spurned and repelled his offered bribe of apostacy, whilst to human view it was the only alternative between them and ignorance, poverty, starvation, and death. But they welcomed all sooner than betray principle or violate conscience.

O, sir, they were glorious men and *true*, our Irish Catholic ancestors ; I am prouder of them, so far as I am concerned, than if at the sacrifice of truth, or honor, or principle, they had bequeathed to me the titles and wealth of the Beresfords. Nor can I believe that you, in your heart, entertain any other sentiments in their regard. You, like myself, have borne the penalty of their constancy to truth and conscience ; and in your pulpit in Elizabethtown, in your most fervid and eloquent appeals to your Presbyterian audience, if a recollection of your heroic and invincible Catholic *forefathers* should, perchance, flash across your memory,

you will feel *proud of them*, and *ashamed of yourself*: “How came you there?” If I held you capable of other sentiments I should be uttering a libel on the Irish heart in particular, and on human nature in general.

Sir, I think you made a great mistake in publishing your Letters anonymously; especially when you took the unmanly and unwarrantable liberty of blazoning forth my name in connection with them, whilst you concealed your own. But having done this, you have made another great mistake in allowing the soft, warm breath of thoughtless flattery to melt so prematurely the waxen ties of your mask. Your Letters have been compared to those of Junius, but you have not imitated your model successfully, in the important affair of *keeping your own secret*. You have made another mistake still, in weaving in your *own biography*, your *own personality*, as the woof of your polemical web. Another mistake still you have made, in bringing in your parents to embellish your pages. It would be wrong for you, I suppose, in your new light, to pray for the soul of your deceased father; but you might have written a very clever book against popery without invading his grave or disturbing his ashes at all. The same may be said in general of those little stories with which your first

Letters are adorned, about "yourself," and your "house," and your "hall," and the "dark room up stairs," and the "drunken priest" to whom you ministered brandy, &c. &c. These "awful disclosures" would do very well in the pages of Maria Monk, Miss Partridge, or some of the other *vestals* of their class, of whom the Catholic Church is not worthy. Even in the writings of Monk Leahy, I do not say they would be out of place.

But in the production of a scholar and a gentleman like you, I am sorry to see them. They have a kind of *mean*, "tell-tale" appearance—they are a betrayal of former friends and associates, which, to my mind at least, indicates the absence of manly, generous feeling, as well as of elevated taste. But as you have thought otherwise, I must review them somewhat at length in my next letter. Meantime I remain with pity and good wishes as usual.

† JOHN HUGHES, Bishop of New York.

## LETTER IV.

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TO KIRWAN,

ALIAS THE REV. NICHOLAS MURRAY, D. D.,  
Of Elizabethtown, New Jersey.

DEAR SIR:—

I think it has been clearly proved in my last letter, and from evidences the more indisputable, as they are furnished by your own pen, that you had no reason, either *intellectual or moral*, for leaving the Catholic Church.—The only reason, deduced by inference from what you have written of yourself, will be found in a thick, dark cloud of ignorance and infidelity, such as, I trust in God, never enveloped the mind of any other Irish Catholic peasant at the age of eighteen, either since or before.

Yet, sir, I do not believe that your ignorance of the Catholic religion, when you left it, was so unmitigated as you pretend. It will be very difficult for you, however, either to retract or explain, in *your real character*, what you have published of yourself under the duplicity of your *mask*.

I know not what intoxicating influence flat-

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terry and self-complacency may have produced on a mind and memory like yours. But I do know that whoever writes under a mask, and in a character even partially feigned, and especially if he writes on any grave subject, in which mankind take a deep interest, does so at the imminent peril of his own reputation. He is nearly certain to be found out. And when this happens, his attempts to reconcile the discrepancies between his *assumed* and his *real* character are sure to produce, in the public mind, a feeling of ridicule not unmixed with a feeling of contempt.

In the introductory note prefixed to your letters I learn that they were furnished to Samuel I. Prime, "under the injunction of *secrecy* as to the author's name." If you lived in Spain or Sicily, there might be some reason for this unnecessary precaution. But if your purpose was to tell "the truth," even "the whole truth," and "nothing but the truth," in your testimony for Presbyterianism or against Catholicity, what motive could you have had in this free country for this studious concealment of your name? *Here* the press is free, and writing *against* Popery is even at a premium. Why then, as an *honest man*, conceal your name? This looks badly. Mr. Prime, indeed, loaned you *his endorsement*, whatever that may be

worth. *He* introduces you to the public *vouching for your veracity* in these words: ". . . It is proper to say that the writer's character is an abundant guarantee for the fidelity of all matters of fact here stated, and that he is prepared to maintain them, if they should be called in question." Now, sir, there are some things which you state as matters of fact, which I beg leave most emphatically to call in question. I hope you may be able to maintain them, or if not, I hope Mr. Prime will be willing to forfeit his recognizances.

I. You state, as a matter of fact, that nearly at the age of manhood, "*on as full an examination of the subject as you could give it, you came to the conclusion that you could not remain a Roman Catholic.*"—p. 12. Now, sir, I refer to your own testimony, quoted in my last letter, as proof that your mind "*was a perfect blank as to all religious instruction,*" and I insist that therefore you did not give the Catholic religion as full an examination as you could, for you could, at least, have revived in yourself the knowledge of "*the Catechism*" which "*you had forgotten.*"

II. You state, as a matter of fact, that "*in one of the large interior towns of Ireland, . . . you resided in a house, and over the store in which you were then a clerk.*"—p. 13.

You then proceed to tell us about a drunken priest, Father B., whom you helped out of the gutter, and wind up the whole narrative with the remark “and young as I was.” This phrase, in ordinary language, would refer to a period as far back as memory goes—a period in which reason was but in the dawn of its development—say 8, 9, or 10 years of age ; but at that period, if we can believe you, you were already a “clerk in a store !” Pray, dear Kirwan, what kind of a clerk were you ? “Young as you were,” by your own account, you were able “to shut the store windows at night”—you were able “to help a man out of the gutter”—you were able to “clean off his Reverence”—you were able to “give him his brandy next morning,” and yet you were just in the period of dawning reason and earliest memory, in which you tell us that “young as you were,” all this made an impression on you. The circumstantial part of the story is still more wonderful than the leading facts. For instance, you could not see the man in the gutter, and you were “attracted towards him by a *singular* noise.” Pray what kind of a noise is a *singular* noise ? And then, the night was so dark that had it not been for the singular noise he might have perished. But on the other hand, it was light enough to recognise “Father B.,

the miracle worker." And instead of helping the poor man, as a *decent* "clerk in the store" should have done, you ran in blabbing to the lady of the house, that Father B. was drunk in the street. And the "*lady* of the house" gave the "clerk in the store" "a stunning slap on the side of the face," and "the clerk in the store" "staggered under the blow, and then turned round in the best nature in the world to assist in cleaning off his reverence." Next morning you "gave him his brandy," and "young as the clerk in the store was, all this made an impression upon him." Sir, if the dullest lawyer in the country had you under cross-examination on this subject, he could not fail to confound the gravity of the bench with irrepressible laughter. Observe, I do not raise any question as to whether the priest was drunk or not; I let that pass. I have myself seen among the convicts of the penitentiary, individuals pointed out as having once been respectable Presbyterian ministers, and who were there for crimes even *more heinous* than drunkenness. But no man of right feelings would pretend to justify an opposite religion, or to condemn theirs, on account of their crimes and misfortunes. I beg leave, then, to call in question the facts which you state in your *circumstantial evidence* in this case. And I

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direct your attention particularly to the contradiction implied by the fact that you were a child at the *same time* that you were "a clerk in the store."

III. You state as a fact that, on your father's demise, your mother paid the priest money enough to have his soul prayed for by name, on every Sunday for two or three years. That, when the money was expended, his name was given out no more. That, when she inquired the cause of this, the priest told her, that "*your father's soul was still in Purgatory, but that she had forgotten to send in the yearly tax at the time it was due.*"—(p. 14.) You add, *that with this fact in particular, you are entirely conversant.*

Now, sir, I question this "fact." I deny this "fact." I pronounce it to be a *fabrication and not a fact.* And if the courtesy of language authorized it, I should feel bound to designate it by a still harsher word. No priest would ever dare to decide when, or whether any soul was released from Purgatory. No Irish mother, or wife, or widow, would ever speak to a priest in the manner in which you describe your mother as having spoken to him. It is true *she* had not, like her son, the benefit of a Presbyterian education. She bore the penalty of her ancestors, and her creed. But

she knew the principles of the Catholic faith better than you do ; and your superior *general* information does not authorize you to envelop her in this gross imputation of ignorance as to her faith. *I am willing to go to any reasonable expense to prove this a fabrication, if either you or Mr. Prime have the courage to meet me, in a formal investigation.*

IV. You state that "Father M. held frequently his confessions at your house." "That he sat in a dark room up stairs with one or more candles on a table before him." That "those going to confession followed each other on their knees from the front door, through the hall, up the stairs, and to the door of the room."—(p. 19.)

Now, sir, your house is likely to become as well known as Shakspeare's. A relative of yours has taken the pains to describe it, in a late number of the Freeman's Journal. According to him, it would be a building in the primitive style of Irish architecture. The same, very likely, which prevailed when the round towers were constructed. Up stairs would be *up a ladder* to what is called a *loft*. And if Father M. heard confessions there, I can see the great propriety of one or more candles on the table. For according to the primitive architecture of Ireland, light was received into

the dwellings, either horizontally, by the door, or vertically by the chimney. The former was made for the purpose of ingress and egress, and the latter for the double purpose of *always* letting the smoke *out*, and *sometimes* letting the day *in*. If then, Father M. had heard confessions in such a place, without one or more candles on the table, what a beautiful theme this circumstance would have afforded to a morbid imagination like yours.

Sir, I feel somewhat humbled at being obliged, as a reviewer, to notice this, as well as other portions of your Kirwan's letters, which, in my opinion, *propriety should have induced you to leave under the protection of domestic privacy*. If you were still a Catholic, like your pious albeit uneducated, mother, you would feel rather proud than otherwise of what appears to be the fact as regards the humility of your ancestral "halls." Poverty is not regarded, by those with whom you now associate, as respectable. And yet it has been ennobled by the example of Our Redeemer and His Apostles. It is still ennobled, in the estimation of the Catholic Church, when it is selected by voluntary choice, and is never dishonorable, except when it is immediately connected with, or resulting from moral guilt.

Our glorious Catholic ancestors were driven

back into the cabins of Irish primitive life ; and Protestantism, *in anticipation of the good things of heaven, made sure* also of the good things of the earth. The churches, the glebe lands, the monasteries, the castles and domains of our Catholic forefathers, became the usurped inheritance of Protestantism, by right of legal spoliation, from the period when the Reformation took the interpretation of the Bible into its own hand—aided of course by acts of Parliament.

When, therefore, you describe the Catholic “Priests” “moving about as spectres, as if afraid of the light of day,” you trace a picture which seems to call up to my imagination the lives of the Apostles, and of their Divine Master, going about meekly and unobtrusively in the discharge of their heavenly mission ;—whilst the contrast suggested by the antithesis as in favor of the Presbyterian ministry, would suggest to my mind the idea of an inflated clerical pedant .. makes the avenues of life narrow wherever he passes in bustling and gassy rotundity. But I merely hope that you, judged by your own pen, are not a fair specimen of the class to which you now belong. At all events, I “call in question” the description of “our house,” and hope that you and Mr. Prime will maintain it.

V. You state as a fact, that “on your first

*remembered* journey to Dublin, you passed by a place called, *if you mistake not*, St. John's Well." You tell me that I know it is one of the holy wells. I answer that I know nothing about it. But you appear all at once singularly scrupulous, and I look upon the phrase, "If I mistake not," as equivalent to the phrase, "Young as I was," when you were already a "clerk in the store." I cannot dwell on your evidence respecting what was "called, if you mistake not, St. John's Well;" but I have no hesitation in saying that the story is, either in whole or in part, a fabrication. It is found on page 21 of your first series, and I call your attention to it, in the hope that you and Mr Prime shall maintain what you have there stated as facts.

VI. The story about the sun "dancing" in the heavens and in the chapels on Easter Sunday morning, and the attempt to produce a delusive corresponding phenomenon in the chapel by "an individual managing concealed mirrors, so as to produce the wonderful effect," (p. 27,) I pronounce to be equally *a fabrication*, or a mere playful supposition, uttered for the amusement of children. I hope that you and your endorser will see to this matter also.

VII. Again: you tell us as a fact, that you "saw good papists eating eggs and fish and

getting drunk on these days, (Fridays and Saturdays.) But that this was no violation of the laws of the Church."—(p. 32.) This, sir, as far as regards what you call "good papists" and "getting drunk," and yet not violating the laws of the Church, *is a fabrication*.

This same page records the *turning point* of your life, the *crisis* of your conversion. You came to the conclusion that as regards the eating of meat on one day, and not on another, God could not make it a sin by distinction of days—so that if a man can plough on Thursday, by your rule, God cannot make it a sin for him to do so on Sunday. And here, in point of fact, is the first, and perhaps the best, reason which your letters furnish for your conversion. It seems that after mature deliberation, you found that to forbid a man's eating meat on Friday is an unreasonable regulation, and you rejected it. It would appear by inference that as regards meat, on such days, what your conscience approved your appetite appropriated ; and with singular naïveté, you tell us that "*as far as you now remember this was your first step towards light and freedom.*"—(p. 32.)

By-the-by, this calls up a period in the calamities of Ireland which had almost passed into oblivion ; and which corresponds more

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or less with that of your conversion from Popery.

About twenty-five or thirty years ago, Lord Farnham, and other gentlemen of the evangelical nobility, introduced into Ireland a religious movement called “the second Reformation.” It was a season of distress among the peasantry, such as succeeds, year by year, in the history of our unfortunate native country. Lord Farnham had almost obtained a patent from the legislature for the efficiency, and admirable simplicity of the new contrivance for converting the Irish. It was this. The kitchens were turned into scriptural reading-rooms for the starving population of the neighbourhood, once a week. The day selected *happened* to be Friday, in almost all cases. After Bible-reading, soup was given out instead of syllogisms, and the “second Reformation” went on admirably until the potatoes of harvest became mature enough for the people’s use. Lord Farnham and his colleagues supposed that *if the landed proprietors and gentry could only succeed in establishing an amicable understanding between the conscience and the stomach of the “lower orders,”* Ireland would soon become a Protestant country. But I need not dwell upon it, as you are old enough to remember how it was ridiculed by Cobbett

and other writers wherever the English language was spoken.

Now I do not say that you are a child of the "second Reformation," but the fact of your having made the first step towards light and freedom through the medium of something like a Friday-beefsteak, looks very much like it.

See, Rev. Nicholas Murray of Elizabethtown, into what a position your "playing of pranks" behind Kirwan's *mask* has betrayed you !!

Besides the bow which Mr. Prime has volunteered you, you have made one for yourself —still under the mask, however. You tell us that, even before "you took up your pen you were not unknown to the men of our age, nor unsolicited. . . ." "The men of our age" (!!!) —or of any age, are very few, and posterity has reserved to itself, almost absolutely, the right of determining who they are. To save your modesty, therefore, I am obliged to suppose that the printer has made a mistake here, and that if one could have the benefit of a peep at your manuscript, it would be found that you had written, "the men of our (vill)-age."

Ah, sir, it seems that your misfortune through life has been to have been under the influence of bad advisers—since you tell us you were "solicited" to write against Popery. The cir-

cumstance reminds me of an anecdote which I have lately read in a London paper, and which I trust will not offend you, as it has already been employed in a description of England's highest *Protestant* nobility. It seems, a drover found it difficult to keep his cattle together in the crowded approaches to the English metropolis. And in his extremity he called out to his neighbor, "I wish you would loan me a bark of your dog." You know, sir, that *broad* ridicule is the forte of the English as compared to the French, and a Cockney wit tells us that Lord John Russell has turned the drover's hint into the philosophy of politics, and that whenever *his* herd betray a tendency to straggle from the whig path, he "*borrow*s a bark" from Sir Robert Peel. However this may be, I am satisfied that "*the* men of our age," if there be any such, would never have *borrowed* a bark of you.

This letter is already too long, and I must bring it to a close. But in doing so, I cannot forget how often you have told us that you were once an infidel. There are evidences scattered up and down through your letters, which, to an unprejudiced and impartial reader, would make it appear doubtful whether you are not still so. Some of these I shall present in my next. I shall not venture to pronounce

an opinion on the subject, as the Almighty alone can penetrate the hearts of men.

In the mean time, however, I remain, with increasing pity, but with undiminished good-will.

✠ JOHN HUGHES, Bishop of New York.

## LETTER V.

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TO KIRWAN,  
ALIAS THE REV. NICHOLAS MURRAY, D. D.,  
Of Elizabethtown, New Jersey.

DEAR SIR:—

It is deeply to be regretted that the serpent of infidelity was ever permitted to nestle in your bosom;—for when I consider that you reduce the standard of revelation to the test of common sense—when I consider the looseness of your moral principles, so far forth as they are exhibited by your own pen—when I behold *the spirit* of Voltaire and Thomas Paine in the profanity and ribaldry with which you treat every sacred subject which your common sense does not approve, I am compelled to say that even on the supposition that infidelity had been expelled from your breast before the writing of your letters, still,

“The *trail* of the serpent is over them all.”

Your moral principles, as set forth by yourself, even in my regard, are much more in keeping with what might be expected from a

skeptic of the world, than from a clergyman of any Christian denomination. You have the grossness to impute to me that I am consciously a deceiver of my fellow-creatures, and yet you do not hesitate to express respect for my character. Is this a principle of Presbyterian inculcation? Or has it shot up through the Confession of Faith from the older and deeper root of your early infidelity?

Again, you urge me to renounce the Catholic religion, in which, you suppose, I do not believe; and yet, with that loose morality which would better become a professed infidel, you implicitly encourage me to persevere in carrying on the supposed villainy of deception! The reader would hardly believe this statement possible, so I shall quote your own words to prove it. You say: "*And since in the maturity of my judgment I have examined this matter, I have greatly commended your wisdom in withholding the Bible from the people. If I were a Bishop or a Priest of your church I would do the same.*"—p. 29. So then, dear Kirwan, you have the candor to avow *on principle*, and in the "*maturity of your judgment,*" that if your lot had been cast among villains, you would be as great a villain as any of them. Is this avowal worthy of even an infidel?

That you should be where and what you now are, is easily accounted for—by the ignorance of your youth which you have described, and the poverty which you have not described. Ignorance and poverty are mysterious dispensations of God's providence. And, on that account, I would treat with indulgence whatever errors *in your early life* are to be ascribed to either. But for the deliberate conclusions, uttered in your recent letters, and in the “maturity of your judgment,” in which you avow yourself ready to act an evil part with Bishops and Priests, on the mere condition of your having been one of them, I cannot but hold you *immorally responsible*.

Thank God, however, you are neither a Bishop nor a Priest; and your once having been talked of as a candidate for Maynooth, was, happily for the Church, only “talk” after all. You are a Presbyterian minister in Elizabethtown, where your ministry can do no harm;—for, if your creed be true, those who are foreordained to eternal life, will be saved *with, as well as without*, your pastoral offices.

In my last letter I showed, according to your own account, that the prohibition to eat flesh-meat on Fridays and Saturdays was the first practical reason for your change of religion. It was an “unreasonable regulation, and you

rejected it ; and as far as you now remember, this was your first step towards light and freedom.”—p. 32. On the very next page we find you soliloquizing in a style of infidel rationalism, which Pagan Greece, or Protestant Germany, could hardly have surpassed. “ I thus reasoned with myself; God is a spiritual and intelligent Being, and he requires an intelligent worship. What worship I render him in the Mass I know not,” (of course, since you had forgotten your catechism,) “ my intelligent worship only is acceptable to Him, and is beneficial to me. I am a rational being, and I degrade my nature, and insult my Maker, in offering to Him a worship in which neither my reason, nor his intelligence, is consulted.” p. 33. Now, dear Kirwan, when we consider the state of your mind at the period when this pretended soliloquy occurred, “ a perfect blank as to all religious instruction,” it becomes a grave question, which I leave to the decision of casuists in mental philosophy, whether or not, in the higher ordinary sense of the term, you could rightfully call yourself a “ rational being.”

But I make the quotation for another purpose. The whole passage betrays a strong affinity to the spirit of Paine’s “ Age of Reason.” The high contracting parties were *God*

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on the one side, and *yourself* on the other. *Both were intelligent beings*—your Maker would be *insulted*, and *your nature* would be *degraded*, if you held the intercourse of worship with Him, *except on the principle of reciprocal intelligence*. You had just tasted of the forbidden food on the preceding page, and acquired the knowledge of “good and evil.” You had partaken of Egypt’s *flesh-pots*, and the manna had become insipid and distasteful. For *your* mind, there was no “intelligence” in it, and so, very naturally, you gave up—the Mass.

But now, the floodgates of the knowledge of good and evil being once opened, we may expect the mysteries of revelation to be inundated by the deluge of *your* “intelligence,” *your* “reason,” *your* “common sense.” Accordingly, the adorable mystery of the Christian Eucharist, in treating of which the Fathers of the Church were struck with holy dread and religious awe, is described by you as an “absurdity.”—(page 35.) So it has always appeared to the *animal man*.

I need scarcely inform you, sir, that the infidels of all ages would have been quite satisfied, if they had been allowed to *construe* the *Bible* according to what they call *common sense*. In reference to this standard, they and

you appear to be perfectly agreed. Thus, you make the Bible and common sense the ultimate tribunals in the decision of religious belief. Thus, in the exercise of common sense, you no doubt deny the Divinity of Christ implicitly, at least, since you call it "blasphemous" to designate the ever glorious and Blessed Virgin Mary, "as the Mother of God." If the Person of Christ was simply Divine, and Mary was truly his mother, she is, and has been always called, Mother of God, as well as mother of man; and your denial of this can be logically sustained, *only by your denial of the Saviour's Divinity*. In fact, I suppose your "common sense" has already pronounced against the mystery of the Incarnation. Thus also, you take sides with the infidels of the Redeemer's age, as well as of our own, and you tell us, in spite of the evidence furnished by Him in His human character, and assert *that God only can forgive sins*.—(page 67.) In the spirit of a true infidel, you describe the priesthood of the Catholic Church, throughout the world, and for eighteen centuries, as having been actuated solely by the love of money.—(page 70.) Again still, in the spirit of the infidel, you sneer at the history of religion as counter to your appeal to "common sense," and tell us, that "with you the authority of our

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popes and councils are not worth a penny."—(page 70.)

The angel Gabriel saluted the blessed Virgin Mary, as the scripture records, "Hail, full of grace;" but you, the Presbyterian minister of Elizabethtown, speak of her as you would of a female selling candies at the corners of the street, from whom you had just bought a supply for the young Kirwans, and call her the "good woman" *condescendingly*.—(page 74.) The holy Eucharist under your "common sense," you declare to be so "absurd as to defeat itself."—(page 75.) You decide that the words, "This is my body," mean, this is *not* my body, and with that swelling vanity peculiar to an evangelical minister who takes "common sense" as his rule for interpreting holy scripture, you exhibit your sleight of hand with a puff of self-complacency, and call upon us to admire—"just see how *a little common sense* simplifies every thing."—(page 76.)

Lest I should interpose by venturing to suggest that a thing ought to be received for what our Saviour says it is, you warn me off, and tell me in true arrogant style, that "you will have none of my nonsense about the substance contained under the species."—(page 76.) Now, dear Kirwan, I have scriptural authority for what you here call nonsense.

The Holy Ghost descended on the apostles under the species of "tongues of fire:" he descended on the Saviour under the species of "a dove," and you have decided that the distinction *of the Evangelists* between the species and the substance is "nonsense; . . . it is 'darkening counsel by words without knowledge.'"—(page 76.) I recommend your case to the General Assembly. In fact, you have become so enlightened in matters of dogmatic theology, under the inspiration of "common sense," that you are almost fit for a residence in Boston, where the Reverend Theodore Parker will no doubt have the charity to extend to you the right hand of Christian fellowship.

In reference to the Holy Eucharist, your infidel principle of "common sense" as interpreter of Scripture, prompts you to say that "nothing equals it in absurdity in all paganism."—(page 76.) Pray, did it ever come in the way of your extensive reading to have seen a book called the "PRESBYTERIAN CONFESSION OF FAITH, as *amended* and ratified by the General Assembly at their sessions in 1821, and printed by Tower and Hogan in 1827?" If so, turn to pages 73 and 74, and you will find it ruled that in certain cases men are placed by their Creator in such a situation, that

*if they do a thing* they “commit a sin against God,” and if they do *not* do it, they “commit a greater sin!” Here is a *Presbyterian Doctrine* to which you might apply your “common sense” with some advantage to your own brethren. The rich theme of ridicule which it would furnish for a pen of such profanity as yours, will be obvious to you at a glance.

You tell us that “the manner of our public worship is heathen, and was originally adopted for the seducing of the Heathen to Christianity.”—(page 82.) This idea would seem to have been derived by you rather from Gibbon, than from Voltaire or Thomas Paine. You have the candor, however, to admit the *high antiquity* of our manner of worship, when you describe the use to which it was applied in the primitive Church. The conversion of nations has been itself regarded as a proof of the divine origin of Christianity. You, however, have discovered that it was owing to a system of *seduction*, carried on through our Catholic “manner of worship,” by which the poor Heathen were “seduced” into the new Religion! Could any but an infidel give utterance to such a sentiment?

But detail is unnecessary. The high mysteries of the Christian faith you reduce to the standard of “common sense,” on almost every

page. Thus: "Extreme unction," you have already pronounced "extreme nonsense." Page 82.

"How simple and 'common sense' is all this,"—(S. S. Page 27.) "Blessed be God, you have not turned your keys on the 'common sense' of the world."—(page 29.) Of your infidel ribaldry I will give but one specimen, which I think can hardly be surpassed in the annals of sneering skepticism. "Your daily changing of a wafer into the real body of Christ, and then eating him, beats any thing St. Fechin ever did. Your preparing an old sinner for heaven by rubbing him with olive oil, and then opening its gates to him by the keys which are only in your possession, far surpasses Fechin's turning acorns to pork. We believe the swine themselves are constantly doing this in our Western woods."—(page 39.) You tell us that the respect entertained by Catholics for relics has the *true* relic for its *object*—and that, on Catholic principles, "it is all the same" that the object of reverence or respect should be the head of "St. Paul" or the head of "Balaam's Ass;" and you add in *your own name*, and with a sneer becoming an infidel, "*and I suppose the difference, sir, is very little.*"—(page 70.) So then, Rev. Nicholas Murray, you regard the head of an ass and that of an apostle with equal

respect ; for the reason, no doubt, that in your estimation, both are figuratively of the same species, or perhaps that in this instance both are scriptural subjects.

It seems the Tract Societies and Sunday Schools have adopted your letters, and given them a very extensive circulation. I do not know a *shorter method* of turning the young who may be subject to *their training* into infidels, than by placing such a book in their hands. Each of their pupils has as good a right to explain the Bible according to what he will call “common sense,” as you have had. But they will not be restrained in their blasphemous ribaldry by the limits which a black coat and a white cravat have prescribed for your pen.

They will apply the arguments of “common sense” which you have wielded against Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, to the antecedent doctrines of original sin, and the atonement, and *they* will find no “common sense” in either. But why should I moralize for you on such a subject, when I have no evidence to prove that such a result has not been the very object of your letters ; and that your zeal against Popery is not merely the gilding of the infidel pill which you would wish to see swallowed by tract distributors, Sunday-

school teachers, Sunday-school children, and all.

Sir, the language and sentiment which I have had to pass under review in this letter are so unworthy of a man professing Christianity, that I must withhold, at its close, even the expression of my pity for you, whilst I cherish towards you as usual good wishes and good-will.

† JOHN HUGHES, Bishop of New York.

## LETTER VI.

TO KIRWAN,

ALIAS THE REV. NICHOLAS MURRAY, D. D.,

Of Elizabethtown, New Jersey.

DEAR SIR :—

The task which I imposed on myself at the commencement of these letters is nearly accomplished. I wished to investigate the alleged reasons which induced you to forsake the Church—and which forbid your return. The result is before the public, and may be briefly summed up.

You will observe that I have not pretended to defend a single Catholic doctrine from your coarse and profane invective,—that I have not raised the question with you as to whether those doctrines are true or false; that I have confined myself to watching narrowly the state of your mind, your motives and movements, as described by yourself, until I saw you clearly beyond the bounds of the Catholic church and landed in the cold, dark regions of infidelity. If your own statements as to the utter

ignorance of your mind in regard to any and all religion when you became an infidel, are to be relied on, it follows that in assigning the reasons for your change, as set forth in your letters, you have been attempting a gross imposition on the credulity of your Protestant readers. You give a double certificate of the process of your conversion. One side attests considerable religious information: the other certifies bluntly that "*your mind was a perfect blank as to all religious instruction.*" Both are from your own pen. It remains for you to reconcile the contradiction as well as you can.

Allow me, in the mean time, to suggest the only plausible, natural, and satisfactory reason for the important event in regard to which you have taken such superfluous pains to enlighten the public.

It is understood that you arrived in this country a poor Irish orphan boy. This was not your fault. It might have been your merit. Whether you were *then* an infidel or a Catholic is best known to yourself. At all events you attracted the charitable notice of certain Presbyterian patrons. In the intentions of their benevolence towards you, your renunciation of Popery was a condition either already accomplished or necessarily implied as

a *sine qua non* of your education. Now what could be more natural, under these circumstances, than that you should become a Protestant, after the fashion of training provided, and the creed professed by your patrons ? If in all this your conscience approved of what your friends recommended, so much the better for you. I only mention the circumstances to supply a hiatus in your narrative. They are quite sufficient to explain your conversion, and the public would not be so unreasonable, had you made them acquainted with all this, as to ask for any other. It is now nearly thirty years since these things took place. You begin to be well stricken in years—you are approaching the confines of old age ; and the same indulgent public would have dispensed with your reasons for not returning now to the Communion which you thus forsook in your boyhood. It is admitted on all hands that, in cases like yours, a wife and children are substantial objections to such a step. When the husband and father is, moreover, a Protestant clergyman, it requires an extraordinary grace to overcome them.

I now leave it to yourself to say, whether it was not unwise on your part, after having appeared with your natural countenance so long, to put on the *mask* in the fiftieth year of your

age? Whether it was worthy of your rank and station among *the* men of our age, to weave a narrative of your conversion with materials derived from *imagination*, while the plain history of the case lay open before your consciousness and memory? Yet when I regard the profane spirit of your letters; when I consider that you imitate closely infidel tactics against Christianity in your mode of assault—that you ridicule where you cannot reason—that where you pretend to reason it is not against the Catholic doctrine, *as Catholics hold it*, but against such doctrine misrepresented, turned into burlesque, and thus fitted for your purpose—when I reflect on all this, I am not surprised that you constructed your laboratory in the “camera obscura,” and shunned the open day—that you insulted the memory of a fallen but not otherwise dishonorable priest, by affixing *his* name to your letters rather than your own.

You wish me to dispute with you on matters of general controversy. I must beg leave to decline the proposed honor. I cannot consent to dispute with any man for whom I feel no respect, and therefore I can enter into no controversy with you; especially until you have extricated yourself from the inconsistencies and self-contradictions pointed out in this re-

view. You suggest “the inference that I am a devil.”—(p. 64.) You proclaim “your high respect for me.”—(p. 75.) Now, sir, I entertain no respect for any man, and especially a *Minister of the Gospel*, who can cherish and avow “his high respect” for “a devil,” even by inference.

You wrote your letters in the midst of the awful famine which strewed the highways and ditches of your unhappy country with dead bodies, last year. Among them may have been some of those for whom, Mr. Prime says, you wrote your letters, viz: “your kinsmen, according to the flesh.” Now, it was not uncommon for persons, whose *Irish* heart had not become withered by hostile seasoning, to become insane, during that awful crisis—turned into maniacs by the news of an hour. Sectarianism was forgotten—humanity was stirred to its depths in the bosom of the entire American people—Jews, Christians, Catholics, Protestants, Presbyterians, believers and unbelievers of every name, were vying with each other in their efforts to send bread to the dying. And they did send bread; they constructed an historical monument of charity, glorious as the land which reared it, and sufficient to atone, in some measure, for the bigotries of a thousand years. It was in the midst of this death-

struggle of your native land, that you had the impiety to invent, and the inhumanity to apply, the following profane and horrible *pun*, *on the words of our Saviour* :—"He that eats this bread will never hunger. All that you (Catholics) have to do, if your principle be true, *is to give your wafer to the poor, famishing Irish, and they hunger no more.*"—(page 77.) How well this sustains Mr. Prime's statement, that in writing your Kirwan's letters, you were actuated by "a sense of duty to your kinsmen, according to the flesh, your countrymen and brethren!"

But supposing I were to enter into controversy with you on general topics, it is manifest that besides being a *party*, you claim to be a *witness*, an *advocate*, and what is more, a *judge*, in your own cause! You profess to teach me what the Catholic religion is, although you had "forgotten your catechism at eighteen years of age," and I take it for granted you have never looked into it since, except in the same spirit and for the same purposes which induce the infidel to read the scriptures. If I pretend to know any thing of my religion, you politely tell me that "you will have none of my nonsense." Why then do you ask me to enter into controversy with you? Besides, who would be the judge? "Common sense,"

you reply. But *whose* common sense, yours or mine? If you submit to mine, I condemn your position at once. If you will not submit to mine, what right have you to suppose that I should submit to yours? To what tribunal do you appeal? That of history? But its authority with you is not worth a penny! To the Bible? But the Bible by itself will give no decision. It requires an *interpreter*, as much as the constitution and laws of the country. Who shall be the interpreter? Methinks I hear you speaking of *your* "common sense" again for that office—so that we come round the Protestant circle to the starting point.

If you say the appeal is to the "common sense" of mankind in general, (restricting the term to those who profess Christianity,) the verdict will not be unanimous; but it will be in my favor by a majority of three to one. To what tribunal, then, would you be willing to submit, in case I were disposed to join issue with you in a controversy on the great questions on which Catholics and Protestants are divided? But the inquiry is purely hypothetical; for although I reserve to myself the right of reviewing your labors, when I think proper, depend upon it there will not, there cannot be, any dogmatical controversy *between us*. If your genius and inclination lie in the direction

of profanity, you can continue to insult the mysteries of the Catholic faith as you have done. For this you have but to copy from Protestant writers of your own class, who have gone before you. But I see no reason why I should undertake to discuss the reprint of their opinions, found in your book, rather than in the original text as found in their own. As far as either come in the way of my subject, I shall do this at my own convenience, in the sequel of those letters which I have addressed to my "Dear Reader," and *not* to you. In the present review I purposed only to consider those little incidents of waning faith, accumulated misgivings, and autobiography which preceded, or were connected with, your *transition* from the Catholic faith to a Protestant denomination. This portion of your letters was your own, and was (what cannot be always said of works of imagination) perfectly *original*. Having done this, it only remains for me to assure you of my sincere good wishes, and to say for the present, farewell.

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And now I will take the liberty of addressing a few words to the general reader in connection with this subject. What advantage does religion, of any name, derive from such books as Kirwan's letters? Do they promote piety?

Is charity increased by them? Do they convert Catholics? Is the faith of Protestants so weak that it requires the support of such buttresses? The questions on which Catholics and Protestants are so unhappily divided have been discussed by able men on both sides, until the argument has been exhausted. These are considerations which address themselves to sincere minds of all parties. Those who will reflect a moment will perceive that the Catholic religion has withstood and now withstands such attacks, just as the pyramid does the assaults of the wandering Arab. If it were the system which such writers as Kirwan represents, it could not subsist a single year. Good men from within, who know what it really is, would not stay; good men from without would not come to it. Now a whole volume might be filled with the names of illustrious converts from the different denominations of Protestantism, who, after mature deliberation, have joined the Church within the last quarter of a century, many of them at the sacrifice of their worldly interests and prospects. How could this have come to pass if Catholicity were what these writers allege?

Does not this single *fact* outweigh a ton of such theory-books as the *Key of Popery*, or *Kirwan's Letters*?—What are these books

generally made up of? Assertion, party invective, charges, sometimes entirely false, and always grossly exaggerated.

Thus, such writers as I speak of will tell you that the Catholic Clergy are a vast corporation of swindlers.—But how will any man of even moderate judgment reconcile *this* with the *fact* that no other clergymen are so ready to encounter danger in the discharge of their ministry, whether in the cholera-hospitals, the fever-sheds, or wherever it becomes a martyr of charity to meet death? They will tell you that the Catholic religion is the deadly enemy of liberty. But then how comes it that all the elements and principles of social right and civil liberty are of Catholic origin, and that the best lawyer among us would be somewhat puzzled if requested to point out a single *addition* made to them by Protestantism? This is *fact*, in opposition to theory. When Protestantism came it found several Republics, and did not find one *absolute* monarchy in Christendom, except Russia, which was not in communion with the Pope. They will tell you that the Catholic religion is an enemy to knowledge. But the fact is that if you remove from the map of Christendom, all the great institutions of knowledge, in every department, founded and endowed by Catholics alone, very little will be

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left remaining. They will tell you that the Church is the enemy of happiness. But the fact is that nations appear to have been much more happy, if apparent contentment be any symptom, before the reformation, than since. Religious and civil, not to speak of general, wars, have followed each other in almost constant succession in most of the countries of Europe since that event; and if these be signs of happiness, I am much mistaken. They will tell you that poverty is a certain companion and consequence of the Catholic religion.—This, even if it were true, amounts to little; for the Divine Author of Christianity did not intend his religion for the special advantage of bankers and stock-jobbers, as these writers would lead us to suppose. And if the “Gospel was preached to the poor,” it follows that poverty would be, if any thing, a sign in favor of the true religion, rather than the contrary. Italy and Spain may be called poor nations, but yet I am not aware that any one is allowed in those Catholic countries to die by the road-sides of starvation. Protestant England, on the other hand, is a country of *great wealth* and *great pauperism*. But in England and Ireland, such writers point to the contrast between the Catholics and Protestants. They seem to forget, however, that by one thousand

and one different ways, sometimes directly, at all times indirectly, the Protestants of those countries have been, legally till within less than twenty years, *helping themselves* in the way of worldly prosperity, *at the expense of the Catholics*. Now this is the fact, and no man of common information and candor will deny it.

I might go on indefinitely in pointing out the mutual contradiction between the facts of history and the theories of your anti-Catholic writers, of a certain class. But as regards Ireland in particular, not only were the laws made so as of a certainty to reduce the Catholics to poverty, but if ignorance is an impediment to the attainment of wealth, the legislature determined that the Catholics should be poor forever; and with the stigma of so barbarous an enactment on the escutcheon of Protestant Britain, it requires singular power of face in such writers as the Rev. Dr. Murray, of Elizabethtown, to allude to the subject at all. Let me contrast the facts of history, in the very terms of the several statutes, with the theory of our modern instructor.

“If a Catholic kept school, or taught any person, Protestant or Catholic, any species of literature, or science, such teacher was for the crime of teaching, punishable by law by ban-

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ishment—and, if he returned from banishment, he was subject to be hanged as a felon.

“If a Catholic, whether child or adult, attended, in Ireland, a school kept by a Catholic, or was privately instructed by a Catholic, such Catholic, although a child in its early infancy, incurred a forfeiture of all its property, present or future.

“If a Catholic child, however young, was sent to any foreign country for education, such infant child incurred a similar penalty—that is, a forfeiture of all right to property, present or prospective.

“If any person in Ireland made any remittance of money or goods, for the maintenance of any Irish child educated in a foreign country, such person incurred a similar forfeiture.”

Such were the laws. Kirwan’s forefathers, in their day, and himself in his early life, were their victims. Now, with these facts staring him in the face, this man says—“If the ignorance of Ireland has any thing to do with the degradation of Ireland, *I charge that ignorance on Popery.*”—(page 50.) The italics are his own, and to judge by the statement one would be led to suppose that he has not escaped from under the edict *against* knowledge to this day.

No, no; let candid Protestants look for and examine the true facts in all these cases; let

them judge for themselves, and they will be surprised to discover how much that is true has been held back from them on all such subjects, and how much that is false, or falsely represented, has been circulated among them instead of the truth, by mere book-writers and men of the shop. And as regards the Catholic religion, if they wish *to know what it is*, even for the sake of information, let them consult authentic sources, and be slow to receive their knowledge of it from those who are seldom either qualified or disposed to state it truly. In my other series of letters I propose to state it as it is understood by Catholics; to explain its doctrines, where explanation is judged necessary; and to sustain them by such proofs from scripture, history, and reason, as are most likely to have weight with men, whether Catholics or Protestants, who are not yet prepared to reduce the awful mysteries of Christian revelation to the infidel's standard of judgment—"common sense."

† JOHN HUGHES, Bishop of New York.

THE END.